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Jen-min Jih-pao

## SHANSI FARMER COMPLAINS ABOUT FINANCIAL BURDEN IN COOPERATIVE VILLAGE

/Comment: This report appeared as a "Letter to the Editor" in the Peiping Jen-min Jih-pao of 11 June 1953. It discusses excess financial burden of peasants in a village of Shansi Province. The letter gives examples of ill-planned efforts to mechanize at all cost, including the drive to dig wells and buy water pumps, although sometimes no use is found for the wells after they are dug. The financial obligations of a model worker family leaves one third of the annual income with the individual household, while the rest of the money is spent on cooperative ventures and taxes\_/

Kao-chia-chuang Ts'un of the Fifth Ch'u, Lu-ch'eng Hsien, Shansi Province, has 194 households. The total 1952 farm income amounted to 370,580,000 yuan. Of this amount, 39,200,000 yuan went into taxes, while the annual expenditure for well digging and the purchase of water pumps reached a high of 157,960,000 yuan, thus absorbing 41.8 percent of the farmers' income. This amount is equivalent to the sum needed to pay the grain tax for 4 years.

Investigation shows that the village funds for 1952 included 14 million yuans' worth of fertilizer, 8 million yuans' worth of wells,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million yuans' worth of grain seeds, 5 million yuans' worth of consumer cooperative shares, 1,100,000 yuans' worth of new model plows. 700,000 yuans' worth of books and newspapers, and 5,970,000 yuan for entertainment. These funds were all raised by the compulsory assessment of teams and households, and by acreage.

The income of a village water conservation model worker and his family of seven amounted to 5.2 million yuan for 1952. Of this amount, 500,000 yuan went for payment of the public grain tax, and 3,233,000 yuan went for assessments as classified above, so that only 1,407,000 yuan were left from the total income. The same kind of financial burden is carried by over 100 of the 195 households in the village.

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A heavy burden was imposed on the farmers of Kao-chia-chuang Ts'un when the hsien people's government aimlessly decided to select this village as the "key village for the installation of water pumps, compelling the farmer to dig a large number of wells and to buy water pumps. No benefit whatever was derived by the installation of water pumps. During June and July of 1952, water pumps were purchased one after another at the cost of 2,300,000 yuan each, despite the unwillingness of the people to buy them. Ma Lai-ch'eng, an official of the Hsien Agriculture and Forestry Department, told the people: "One water pump costs 2,300,000 yuan and is capable of watering 20 mou of land. Without the water pump you can't do the job." The people were still unwilling; they held progressive mass meetings for 3 days and 9 evenings. As a result, those who were comparatively well off were apportioned to buy one water pump each. Farmer Wu San-ma only owned 5 mou of cultivated land, but was still assigned one water pump. Under the joint method of purchasing, four of the poorer households were assigned the purchase of one water pump. Farmer Lu Wen-chem had to sell 9 mou of land to meet his assessment. Investigation shows that the water pumps were not used extensively, that three water pumps were not used at all, and 57 water pumps used only once. The people got to dislike the pumps so much that they called them "black spiders" and "money grabbers."

The well digging conditions were also burdensome. Hsien and ch'u cadres surveyed the people's land, a total of 4,390 mou of sandy land, and decreed that for every area of  $40 \times 40$  pu, one pu equals 5 feet one well hole had to be dug. In some instances as many as ten wells were dug on 15 mou. The allocation for well digging was set at 20,000 yuan for each of the 114 male members of the labor force, and 10,000 yuan each for the 47 female members of the labor force. While those who dug got paid for their work, others who did not want to do the digging themselves had to pay to get it done.

The wells were dug on the assigned spots of land, regardless of whether or not the owner of the land consented. Of the 130 wells which already existed in the village, only 89 were found to be acceptable. Well-digging got to a point where people would say that "digging a well is like digging a grave." A total of 166 wells were dug last year in this manner, and by spring of this year 156 of them were no longer of use, and had to be filled.

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